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BOOK REVIEWS

How to Teach Reading and Composition. By J. J. BURNS, M.A., Ph.D.
American Book Company.

THE purpose of *How to Teach Reading and Composition* is to "help the teacher prepare for the daily work of the schoolroom." In the first chapter the author criticises the results obtained in reading and writing below the high school. He recommends as means to better results "a higher estimation of the prime importance of these arts," better economy of time," "more thorough preparation on the part of teachers," and "smaller classes." By criticism and comparison the child should be taught to appreciate an author's style, to get the elements of rhetoric from concrete study. The study of rhythm and memorizing selections in poetry and prose also receive attention. An excellent list of poems to be memorized is suggested for the several grades.

Part two is devoted to selections for study and writing. These consist of poems and prose extracts, and have been well chosen. At the end of each selection are explanatory notes or questions.

Although there is nothing novel in the book, it abounds in wholesome criticism and helpful suggestions. A full index adds much to its value.

B. F. ARMITAGE

Reading: A Manual for Teachers. By MARY E. LAING. D. C. Heath & Co., 1901.

THIS book is a valuable addition to this department of pedagogy. It is much more than a manual in the ordinary sense of that word. It marks a radical departure in the discussion of reading. Instead of presenting mere devices and methods as short cuts to a mastery of the subject, the author attacks the fundamental problems involved in teaching reading, discusses them in the light of modern psychology and pedagogy, and works out at least a rational solution.

The author makes a clear discrimination between reading and learning to recognize and pronounce words. The latter, however necessary as a preliminary to reading, is not reading. Reading is defined as a process of thinking, "recalling and relating concepts under the functioning of written words." This has its bearing upon the attitude of teacher and pupil towards even the first lesson. This should have an interesting content and the child should have clear and vivid imagery with which to interpret it.

The difficulty of mastering language forms is recognized, for the child has no direct interest in mastering them. His interest centers in the content, and it is this interest in the thought that is to give the motive for overcoming this difficulty. Attention is secured only through the child's interest, and this comes from presenting appropriate material. The degree of attention focused upon the reading determines the strength of the association. This connection between an idea and the written word is to be fixed, not by repetition, but by "repetition stimulated by interest."

In the judgment of the author it is an evil for the child to regard reading as drudgery. His work is not to be made so easy as not to call forth his best efforts, for

children delight in overcoming difficulties when they get something that they want in return; this compensation for their efforts is thought which has a value for them, which meets their present needs.

This is not a book for the teacher who is looking for cut and dried plans and methods; but the teacher who desires a deeper insight into the problem of teaching reading, that she may work out her own methods in accordance with fundamental principles, will find it full of stimulating thoughts.

An appendix of nearly sixty pages gives representative material for reading in the different grades. At the end of each chapter is a valuable summary of principles. An index would have made the book more usable.

B. F. ARMITAGE

Rome: Its Rise and Fall. A Text-Book for High Schools and Colleges. By PHILIP VAN NESS MYERS, L.H.D. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1900. Pp. xii + 554.

IT is too late in the day to call attention to the appearance of this volume. Already, doubtless, it is in use in many schools. The popularity of the historical text-books previously put forth by the author commends it in advance. And, indeed, it possesses all the qualities which have characterized the long series of Mr. Myer's works — some qualities which are admirable and others not altogether above criticism. It is copiously illustrated. It has nearly a score of maps and plans, and half as many tables and summaries. The table of contents, with its four main divisions, shows that the author has a notion of the grouping of the events into larger wholes. He does not dribble his material through an interminable series of chapters, monotonously similar in length and significance, as do Shuckburgh, and How and Leigh, and even Botsford, in his otherwise excellent history. His selection of material and style of presentation reveal the practiced hands of a master in the production of schoolbooks which have the excellent recommendation that they interest pupils.

But what avail all these excellencies if the author has no first-hand knowledge of his subject, and shows that he is unfamiliar with recent investigation? The preface of Mr. Myers' book gives us a little uneasiness when we read how he is indebted as well to Leighton as to Mommsen. An examination of the text increases this feeling. The treatment in general is altogether superficial and traditional. At critical points the grasp of problems is feeble. In narrative and expository details there is much exasperating inaccuracy. The general inferences and conclusions are usually wrong. This is especially striking in his chapters on the empire. The author's idea about the work of Augustus is that by him "the monarchy abolished five hundred years before this had been restored." He exploits the old notion that emperors like Tiberius and Domitian were little more than abandoned wretches. Of the former he says, "his name lives in history as the synonym of cruelty, tyranny, and scandalous debauchery." It is unfortunate that the author does not add to his undeniable and praiseworthy ability in getting up interesting schoolbooks an adequate scholarship. In the present instance, he might easily have secured this result by associating with himself a specialist in the field of Roman history. From such a combination we might have obtained the ideal text-book. The present work is very far from it.

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